



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0393FL-1 for School Board of Volusia County

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant details projects that have been implemented through the state RTTT-State grant monies.</p> <p>The vision is inclusive for all students. The review would like clarification on "individual commitment of all" means. The project name "Mission 396" is catchy and can be branded nicely. However, the applicant should provide more information regarding how they will "engage students in 21st century learning through problem-based and project-based learning".</p> <p>Core Assurances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- State and district have adopted the CCSS with acceleration of full implementation in ELA for 2012-13.</li> <li>- District has developed the Local Instructional Improvement System (LIIS) that houses a toolbox for educators, students, and parents including grading, curriculum, and data analysis.</li> <li>- My Professional Growth System (MPGS) has been developed by the district in order to facilitate professional learning opportunities for teachers and administrators. When fully implemented it will "support recruitment, retention, and strategic placement of educators".</li> <li>- The district states "the LIIS facilitates personalized learning environments that will increase educators' ability to turn around student performance". Applicant can improve the application by noting a more comprehensive and coherent reform vision that addresses the schools within the district that are the lowest performing schools. There should be something added for the schools in this position.</li> </ul> <p>District's approach to accelerated student achievement, deepened student learning, and increased equity through personalized student support is clear and has some credibility.</p> <p>The vision is grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student interest in the areas of science, math, and technology.</p> <p>The vision supports a high-quality plan in the science, math, and technology areas. However, applicant does not address the other core academic areas such as reading and writing.</p> <p>The vision is somewhat ambitious and achievable. The Goals for the Strategic Plan are: 1)Implement a comprehensive curriculum 2) Increase achievement for each and every student 3)Promote an emotionally, intellectually, and physically safe environment 4) Promote on-going professional development 5) Communicate with stakeholders</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant provides some details regarding the rationale for choosing the grade level spans of 4-12 due to transition years and are a focus because "these years are critical to completion of course credits and staying on track for graduation". This is in line with the district vision of "all students will graduate with knowledge, skills, and values necessary..."</p> <p>The applicant does not provide details regarding the process used to ensure that participating schools will meet the</p>		

requirements, nor do they address how choosing the targeted grade level spans will transpose to other grade levels or schools not being served by the grant.

(b) & (c) Applicant met requirements. Charts included all required information.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)

10

5

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Applicants plan includes:

- Building partnerships that will facilitate learning for students, parents, and teachers.
- Upgrading and utilizing the current data system that houses curriculum, grading, and instructional guides for use by all stakeholders.
- Providing access to technology for students who are below poverty levels.
- A logical Model that supports their vision.

The applicants plan does represent a high-quality plan, but the applicant needs to provide more details explaining how the plan will translate into district wide change and can scale up to schools who are not included in the grant funding. The applicant needs to provide supporting details that will demonstrate how they plan to have their project translate into meaning reform for the district as a whole. While the plan aligns somewhat to the vision and should allow them to meet their goals, the plan itself is somewhat ambitious and achievable.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)

10

7

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant provided tables that represented performance, achievement gaps, graduation rates, and college enrollement.

Applicant provided no narative to explain the process for determining the goals, nor did the applicant explain how the goals compared with state objectives or NCLB targets. Without such guidance, it is unclear as to how clear, obtainable, and ambitious the goals are in relation to the state and national standards.

The goals for performance on summative assessemments are presented. The applicant included the reading results from the FCAT grades 4-8, however the project does not address reading. The applicant included the math results from FCAT for grades 4-8. The performance was given for all subgroup categories. The applicant included performance, but did not include growth. Applicant provides Algebra end of course summative results for grades 7,8, and 9.

The goals for decreasing achievement gaps where determined using the methodology defined in the application. The applicant compared the subgroup profieciency level to the state average. Some subgroups have larger gaps to close than others. For example: In grade 8 reading, the achievement gap between the state and the black students is 26%. By year 2016-17, the achievement gap will be divided by half at 13%.

The applicant expains the graduation rates as based on the federal rates. This is unclear and more guiding information should be given.

The goals for college enrollement are clear and the methodology is provided. Raising the college enrollement rate to 87.4% is very ambitious.

Applicant did not address (e). No points taken away.

## B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	4
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
Applicant provides charts and narrative that details the positive trends for science on the FCAT in grades 5 & 8. There has been improvement over the past six years. According to the graph and narrative, the district has seen a gain of approximately		

18% on FCAT grade 5 for science and 11% on FCAT grade 8 for science.

Applicant addresses with a chart and narrative the AP placement success rate. With 90% of students enrolled in AP passing (C or higher) in 2010-11 and rising to 97% passing (C or higher) in 2011-12.

Applicant also mentions the partnership with Ford Motor Fund's for Advanced Studies. Students enrolled in Industry Certification had a success rate of 73% in 2011-12.

The evidence provided in the narrative supports the LEA's ability to improve student learning outcomes, close achievement gaps, raise student achievement, and increase high school graduation rates. However, the narrative is not clear on how the LEA will directly use the grant funds to attack each of the goal areas that have been mentioned.

Applicant does not specifically address reforms aimed at the persistently low achieving schools.

Applicant mentions the Volusia Instructional Management System (VIMS), but is not specific on how grant money will be used to enhance the system. Currently the system is used as a data warehouse that can generate progress monitoring reports for students, parents, and teachers, but is limited in the availability and use by stakeholders.

The applicant only gave two examples of successful track record for science and AP courses. More information is needed to determine if this is a solid track record and if it can translate into the LEA's ability to implement a high-quality plan.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)

5

2

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant does not provide information that would suggest a high level of transparency. More information is needed to determine if and what information is available to at the school level. At this time "detailed request for public records are handled through the district office."

Applicant does mention the weakness in transparency and states that "more information will be available to increase transparency" as the Local Instruction Improvement System develops. However, they do not state how obtaining this grant will affect the transparency, nor do they provide goals toward transparency.

Due to lack of information it is unclear if there goals are ambitious and achievable.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)

10

8

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Based on the information provided, the State statutory and regulatory environment should not affect the LEA's ability to implement the vision found within the plan. According to the applicant, the key requirements from the state are 1)implementing CCSS 2) increasing STEM and career-themed courses 3)developing teacher evaluation that promotes professional development. The applicants plan is inline with these requirements, therefore the plan should be able to be implemented with no issues regarding state statues.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)

10

3

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant has several letters from community members that support the district in RTTT-D funding and implementation.

Applicant could have shown more inclusive evidence in the participation of parents, student, teachers, and principals in the planning of the grant. The applicant states that the "superintendent invited" groups from the community to give initial input. The applicant states that a presentation regarding the grant was created (by whom?) and presented to middle school principals. The principals then showed the presentation to staff. The majority of this grant is geared toward middle school children, yet the applicant does not provide evidence of having their input prior to the writing of the plan, this may become an issue as the district tries to implement some of the areas in the plan that require outside community based projects in which the parents will be needed for support and transportation.

Applicant references the teachers union, but does not provide any evidence to support that direct engagement and support from the teacher's union was obtained. This plan requires multiple levels of teacher interaction with students, added professional development, and added planning time. Having the teacher's union on board with the plan is an important piece

to implementing a high-quality plan.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)

5

2

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant does provided an analysis for needs and gaps that does identify the transition years as an issue within the district. This does align with the grade selection for the grant.

Applicant does provide alignment between the needs and gaps with the plan itself. The main premise of the plan is concentrated on math and science, yet the needs and gaps addresses other content areas as well.

Applicant provides analysis on student attendance which is not addressed in the reform proposal.

Overall the analysis of needs and gaps does not fully align with the high-quality plan that is presented by the district. As noted above, there are some elements that do align, but there are some that do not. Therefore, the reform proposal will not allow for the district to meet all of its goals and close the gaps presented.

## C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	14

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant only includes math and science as themed throughout the grant proposal yet they mention reading in other sections of data. The interventions are appropriate for the successful implementation of the proposed project, however, it is unclear if the interventions proposed will increase the LEA's ability to generate more success among its students.

The applicant has provided details that support their commitment to ensuring that all students understand that what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals. Through the grant, the district will assign a Career Advocate to each middle school that will "work with guidance team serving as a liaison between students/parents and school personnel". The team will help students define and reach their individual goals. The district will also target 4 & 5 grade students who will be transitioning to middle school within the next few years. The grant will "support efforts to accelerate learning for retained students to get them back on track".

The applicant provides information regarding the Volusia Instructional Management System (VIMS). VIMS is a platform that engages "students in their own learning by organizing information such as grades, attendance, and assessment data into a profile for each student that is updated daily". The district believes that this will allow students to identify and pursue learning and developmental goals linked to CCRS and understand how to structure their learning to achieve their goals. The applicant states "the district will develop an electronic means of recording and monitoring the personalized plan" but does not specifically state how they will improve the current system other than "update".

The applicant will ensure that the students are able to be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest by utilizing Project-based Learning (PBL) and also the Career and Technical Education (CTE) program. According to the applicant, the students are "self-directed choosing what and when they study". However, the applicant does not address what steps will be taken to ensure that teachers are prepared for this change in instructional style, yet they note that "educators must be able to facilitate this learning environment".

The applicant has a plan to address the access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual learning by "networking through mobile devices allowing them to extend the classroom to virtual environments in distant places.

The applicant ensures that student has access to personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development designed to enable the student to achieve his or her goals by "developing an electronic means of recording and monitoring the personalized academic and career plan. This along with the state's required career and education-planning course for middle schoolers and the implementation of the Career Advocate, the applicant has created several avenues for the parents and students to access the information.

Applicant has set a plan that offers high-quality instruction to students in the targeted areas. The applicant will form instructional teams that will evaluate the progress of the school toward meeting the goals of the plan. Applicant details the

teachers' high quality instructional environment, but how will the district ensure that the students are receiving high-quality instructional approaches and environments.

Applicant provides rationale for grant funds to go toward the purchase of mobile devices such that "each participating student will have access to mobile devices as a learning resource, just as textbooks were the tool in the past". Special pricing for home internet will also be available to insure that students and parents have access to the data systems at all times.

Applicant details the data system but does not address the reality of the frequency of the updated information. The applicant uses the concept of "real-time" data suggesting that it is updated live. Without any evidence that the teachers and/or school board has read and accepts these statements, it seems unrealistic that the information will be "real-time" and live 24 hours a day.

Applicant does not address the accommodations and high-quality strategies for high-need students (above and beyond the targeted population) to help ensure they are on track toward meeting their goals and closing the achievement gaps.

The applicant somewhat uses the criterion in support of a high quality plan, but addressing the mentioned issues would allow for a stronger argument.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)

20

14

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant does not specifically address how teachers will adapt content and instruction, providing opportunities for cooperative grouping in response to need, interest, and learning styles for themselves in PLCs as well as the students. Therefore it is unclear if the plan for improving teaching in order to provide appropriate personalized learning environments is reasonable for the LEA to see results.

The applicants plan is shows weaknesses in the LEA's ability to implement instructional strategies for all participating students enabling students to pursue rigorous courses aligned to CCRS and graduation requirements. These weaknesses limit the LEA's ability to implement the plan. See examples or weaknesses below:

-Applicant needs to address the "frequency" of measuring student progress toward goals. The applicant does mention "real-time" data through the data management system, but realistically what does "real-time" mean?

-Applicant needs to address the culture and climate within the schools, especially since there is a teacher's union involved with no mention of how they feel about the the grant implementation and changes.

-Applicant needs to provide more specific details on training, systems, and practice as they relate to the schools progress toward the goals.

-More details needed for increasing the number of students who received instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principles.

## D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	8

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

While the plan does address the LEA's process for addressing state legislation regarding the Academically Challenging Curriculum to Enhance Learning (ACCEL), there are weakness in the plan in addressing key areas of this requirement such as the organization of central office and leadership and their autonomy to be flexible, more details the LEA's plan for allowing students to demonstrate mastery in multiple ways, and more details regarding the use of resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and accessible.

Weaknesses found in the proposal are:

-How the central office will specifically support the schools involved.

-More specifics needed regarding the flexibility and autonomy needed to implement the grant.

-Applicant does not address giving the students opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards in multiple ways. It is noted that with standards-based grading time verses mastery is seen as well as all students are given common assessments.

-More details needed on providing learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and accessible to all students.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)

10

6

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides details regarding the purchase of technology that will supplement the current "Bring your own tablet (BYOT)" policy that is place. They point out that the grant monies will be used to bring the infrastructure up to meet the demand as well as supplement the actual devices for students who are in need.

The applicant proposes that through the grant there will be technicians on site to assist parents, students, and teachers. There will also be access to webinars and instructional tools to supplement the VIMS system. There will be discounted services offered to parents of low-income students and the district will work with local providers to provide internet access to community shelters for families without permanent residence. The applicant should provide more information regarding after hours availability to parents and students who run into issues.

The applicants evidence for how their plan will allow for the stakeholders to export information in order to seek supplemental support through other interventions is weak. The LEA does notes the weaknesses in the availability of the various systems to interact, but states that as the grant is implemented, "more and more content will become available to parents and students".

Overall the LEA's plan does not address all of the needs that would lead to an infrastructure that could support the transparency, support, and interoperability as required by this grant.

## E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	13
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant describes the evaluation and Professional Development audit that is required by the state that will take place and guide the direction of future Professional Developments. However, they are missing an opportunity to explain how as a member of this grant cycle, how they will go above and beyond to assess the impact of the changes made during the grant cycle. They do not address how they will measure, and publicly share information on the quality of the investments funded by RTT-District other than placing a "Race to the Top tab" to the website that hosted prior information regarding grant planning. They state that "financial reporting of expenditures will be available" but do not elaborate on how they will be available and when. The applicant did not address the opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>Applicant addresses communication and engagement for student work, but they have deemed other pieces of the grant as important parts without addressing the communication and engagement related to them. Therefore, the plan does not support a strategy that is sufficient to allow the LEA to reach its goals, and they do not included how they will include stakeholders in the improvement of the plan. They state that the "scope of Work Plans will be posted for participating schools and progress towards goals and deliverables will be noted" but they do not address how they will include the parents, students, and community in assessing the progress of the grant.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>Applicant has identified in 4-8 indicators a &amp; b. For indicator a they have provided rationale and sited that they are in compliance with the ESEA waiver that has been approved for the state. The applicant uses reading and math as an indicator but once again reading is not an area of focus based on the plan itself. The LEA choose b. They provide adequate rationale but do not address the rigorous, timely, and formative information tailored to implementation of the plan.</p>		
<p>Applicant has identified in 9-12 indicators a,b,c,&amp;d. For indicator a they have provide rationale for the mentioned indicators,</p>		

but they have not provided how they will review and improve the measures over time.

Overall the applicant needs to provide more rationale for selection of measure, and detail how the district will improve the use of the measures both during and after the grant cycle. They also need to address how the measurements will be used to translate to parents, teachers, and students how a participant is progressing in the plan. Until these items are addressed the plan is limited in its rationale to be considered a high-quality plan.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)

5

4

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant lacks details regarding plans to evaluate the frequency and changes required timelines during and after the grant.

## F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: There are significant details regarding the specific line items in the budget missing from the narrative. Without those items, the budget is deemed reasonable but not sufficient to achieve the goals of the project. The applicant does specify which costs are associated with one-time investments versus those that are on-going during and after the grant period. The applicant states that "building capacity is utilizing the human resources from the teachers and staff at each building" which aligns with the philosophy of the RTT-District funds for creating an atmosphere for learning that can be sustainable after the life of the grant.		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	4
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: Applicant states that "building capacity is utilizing the human resources from among the teachers and staff at each building" in order to sustain process put in place during the grant cycle. The applicant plans to build capacity through the use of the MPG system. They provide minimal strategies to reinforce the capacity of the teachers and they do not account for the changes in process that needed to be made over time. The district "will continue to seek grant funding" to maintain high quality teacher education. The strategies are minimal but they do support the vision and implementation of plan as well as the plans ability to continue after grant funding. The strategies are achievable but not ambitious.		

## Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	8
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: Applicant details the scale-up process for the competitive preference section. Applicant needs to detail how they will adjust for changes needed in order to transfer the initiative to other schools in the district. Applicant needs to address the sustainability of the project once the grant cycle is complete. The applicant has a plan to establish or continue with partnerships with the several colleges, Halifax Health Center, Daytona International Speedway, and Daytona International Airport. The applicant has created a "Bucs for Life" program at one of the participating high schools and would like to use the grant funds to support the initiative and scale up the initiative to other schools in the district. "Bucs for Life" is much like a "school within a school" situated in a diverse population with a very high poverty rate. The "Bucs for Life" program targets the lowest quartile of academic performers, students who lack credits to move to next grade, low scores on the FCAT, failure in Alg 1 -		

Geometry - Biology - US History, and history of attendance and behavior issues. The applicant addresses the indicators that measure each result at the aggregate level and how that will affect the participating students. Through this program they have created a strategy for targeting resources to improve the most needy of students. They have presented a strategy to scale the model beyond the participating students. They have also addressed how they will assess progress and improve over time.

The partnership will build capacity of the staff in participating schools by providing supports to assess the needs and align them with the partnership's goals, identify and inventory the needs and provide support, create a decision-making process and infrastructure to select, implement, and evaluate supports, engage with family and students about the process, and routinely assess the progress of the program and the participants.

The applicant has created partnerships that will enable them to provide high-quality supports to the participating students in the "Bucs for life" program. The applicant has identified the appropriate results, aligned resources to achieve these results, and integrated services to provide support that extend beyond academics in the "Bucs of Life" program. This enhances the development of the applicant's high quality plan. The partnerships described are ambitious and achievable.

## Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Total	210	127
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# Race to the Top - District Technical Review Form

Application #0393FL-2 for School Board of Volusia County

## A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	8

### (A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Velusia, FL district application includes the district's vision statement: "Through the individual commitment of all, our students will graduate with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to be successful contributors to our democratic society." This vision is not specific enough to guide the application's proposal for reform as it build on its work in the four core educational assurance areas. The district has already addressed these assurances with its adoption of Common Core and State Standards aligned to the RTT State grant, its data systems which hold data on individual students' progress on the standards and is accessible by students, parents and educators, and its system for maintaining educator evaluation and professional development data.

The applicant has set five goals which are aligned with the four core educational assurance areas, however the goals are weak in specifically addressing direction for deepening student learning and increasing equity through personalized student support:

1. Implement a curriculum driven by Common Core and Florida State Standards.
2. Increase achievement for every student



3. Promote a physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe environment for students and staff
4. Promote ongoing professional growth and improve job performances of all staff
5. Communicate and collaborate with stakeholders

In spite of the two weaknesses described above, this vision is more than adequate for promoting reform.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's approach to implementation will support high-level school and district implementation. All schools in the district which serve grades 4 through 12 will participate in the grant, and these schools and student numbers are listed in the application. A data table is included in the application that lists the participating schools, the total number of participating students, the number of participating students from low-income families, the number of high-needs students, and the number of educators. The total number of student participants is 42,099, of which 25,795 are high-needs students (61%) and 21,546 are low-income students (51%).</p> <p>Based on their data, the district will be focusing some efforts on students in the transition years 6 through 9 in order to help students keep on track toward graduation. The VIMS data system enables the district to identify, monitor and support individual students if they are at risk of not graduating on time, as well as provide opportunities for high-achievers. The district has a scaffolded plan for increasing student involvement in the community and deepening career preparation skills through project-based and interdisciplinary learning.</p> <p>The applicant presents a very sound approach to implementation, especially in its focus on efforts in the middle grades, where students who did well as elementary students may become disengaged in school due to lack of goals they believe they can achieve..</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Velusia District has a high-quality plan for meeting the goals listed in A1. The Project Plan table in section A4 of the application lists specific activities to be completed during each year of the grant, plus the deliverables and responsible parties. The planned activities follow the logic model included in Appendix C, which lists district assets (inputs), planned actions (outputs), and a three-step process for achieving their goals. The logic model steps begin with building capacity and creating awareness, followed by transforming teaching practice, and the final result is a personalized learning environment.</p> <p>The district's Grant Project Plan is credible, because it includes activities and time frames that are consistent with its logic model. The district has already established partnerships, as evidenced by four letters of support in the application appendix. It has also established another critical component of their plan, which is the data support system that makes it possible to track student progress, by standards, as well as teacher development and performance.</p> <p>Planned activities for succeeding years of the grant, as diagrammed in Appendix C, build upon the foundation of partnership development and the data system crucial to its goal of individualized learning.</p> <p>Professional development continues throughout the grant period to move into more specific training in STEM, grade bands, at-risk students, student career planning, and virtual/blended learning, etc. Years three and four provide training in leadership teams and increasing teacher effectiveness. These types of training help ensure sustainability of grant programs for the future.</p> <p>The strength of the Velusia plan lies in the very clear logic model and schedule of activities that is consistent with that model. There is no scale up plan, because the entire district population will be served. However, this means there is no expressed plan for continuing reforms or extending reforms beyond the grant period. This could weaken the reform efforts by creating the perception that they are temporary fixes, which resonates with the nonspecificity of the vision.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The table in the application for Criterion A(4)a and b clearly shows the growth targets for the Florida state tests in reading and math and the Algebra I end-of-course exam. The targets were calculated using the Florida Annual Measureable Outcomes formula. These are ambitious goals that appear to be achievable for the overall population of participants and the sub-groups of Hispanic and white students, all of which would need to increase scores by 20 percentage points or less. However, scores for Black students have a gap of 30 percentage points or more to close in four years, and English Language Learners above 5th grade have gaps of 35 – 40 percentage points to close in reading. These goals may not be achievable, even with this</p>		

district's ambitious plan, in four years.

Likewise, there are gaps between the district and the overall state average projected out to 2015-16 for students in the Black, Hispanic, Students with Disabilities, and English Language Learners subgroups that will be very challenging to close.

The district's plans for monitoring in grades 6-9, career academies, blended learning, and close relationships with local businesses and colleges make it more likely that the graduation rate goals can be met.

The district's current college enrollment rate for graduates is high, and it appears feasible to meet the end-of-grant goal, considering the plans mentioned above for increasing the graduation rate.

In general, the district's plans to meet its vision for improved student outcomes is very strong, however there were no specific references in this section of the narrative to ELL students, whose needs may be very different from other low-achieving students whose native language is English, due to cultural as well as language differences.

## B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	3
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative establishes a weak and limited track record of increasing student achievement and career and college readiness with two graphs of science score improvement and one showing an increase in AP test results since 2007. Figures were provided in the narrative of over 90% successful completion of AP and dual enrollment courses in 2011 only. This is insufficient evidence to describe a track record of achievement. Also missing was evidence of improving high school graduation rates and college enrollment over time.</p> <p>The applicant's narrative for this criterion consisted primarily of descriptions of increased participation in programs: Career and technical courses already offer interdisciplinary instruction which will serve as a model for project-based learning in high school, middle school, and elementary schools during the grant period. The district reported recent progress toward increasing students' preparation for college and careers. Over the past year, student participation and success in International Baccalaureate programs and dual enrollment college credit have increased. In addition, all of the district's high schools have Career Academies where students can earn credit toward college or industry certification.</p> <p>No specific reference was found in the application to lowest-achieving or low performing schools.</p> <p>The district has a strong track record of making student performance data available to parents, students, and educators. A prior grant enabled the district to develop its VIMS system, which can link electronic grade books, curriculum, standards, and student progress. This permits teachers to monitor student progress and provide needed support, and both students and parents can access this information. In addition, the system has built-in data-analysis features. Evidence for this record consisted of screen shots of reports available from this system.</p> <p>This narrative exposes a weak or non-existent track record of success, with the exception of the student performance data system and its accessibility by parents and students. Even an excellent plan has poor hopes of success if it does not have a running headstart toward the goals, and it is doubtful that the Velusia School District has the ability to implement its plan.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	1
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>This data is not available at the school level, except by request for public records through the district office. The application states that the planned Local Instructional Improvement System (LIIS) will increase transparency, but it is unclear whether that will include the specific information requested in B(2) (a)–(d).</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district has a favorable context for implementing its grant activities. The state context will support implementation of the district's plan, because the plan fulfills state requirements for implementing the Common Core Standards, increasing STEM</p>		

and career-themed courses, and developing a teacher and leader evaluation system that promotes professional learning.

In addition, the district has developed the data systems necessary to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment with the Common Core Standards. The electronic grade book allows students and parents to follow student progress in real time, and it allows teachers to align student assessments with standards and benchmarks. Another data system, called My PGS, manages teacher evaluation data, professional development, and access to PD opportunities. This will facilitate the grant's plan to manage customized professional development per individual teachers' needs.

The district has been recognized for its exemplary Career Academies, which will be replicated, according to the grant plan, at the middle school level.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)

10

4

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The application did not produce strong evidence of meaningful engagement in the development process by all stakeholders. Teacher, parent, and general community involvement seemed to be absent during the early stages of developing the proposal. Most input was sought after the initial proposal was drafted, and much of the involvement by many important stakeholders, such as parents and teachers, was passive.

The district gathered input from leaders in the higher education and business communities while requesting letters of support. It held focus groups with a number of district departments, such as Technology Services, Instructional Services, and Career and Technical Education, to gather input on the original grant proposal. Drafts of the grant were posted on the district website to enable input from district personnel and community members. It was also reviewed by the Florida Department of Education and made available to the mayors of cities within the district. A presentation on the grant proposal was sent to middle school principals to show to staff, accompanied by a brief survey addressing technology and professional development needs. The Volusia Teacher Association reviewed the document, but no mention was made in the application of the applicant welcoming input or feedback from the Association.

Letters of support were received by 1 university, 1 business, 1 business association, and the YMCA. In addition, a memorandum-of-understanding form has been developed for use with businesses working with the district's career academies. This minimal level of expression of community support may indicate lack of broad stakeholder support or lack of effort in contacting the community for letters of support. Either case suggests distance between the school district and its internal and external stakeholders.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)

5

1

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The district has used data to clearly identify gaps and assess needs for improvement prior to the grant, but they have not produced a high-quality plan with timelines and responsible parties to address current gaps.

These pre-grant gaps were identified and addressed in the grant plan:

- Drops in reading performance after grade 7 and lower than expected Algebra success
- Absenteeism and low achievement in the sub-groups of students with disabilities, English language learners, and Black students

The description of the needs analysis includes speculations for why gaps exist and the future consequences of these gaps, for example, low scores from the end of course exams for 9th grade Algebra I point to possible problems in middle school math instruction. Poor attendance and discipline problems are signs of lack of student engagement and may contribute to low graduation rates in the district. The grant plan will focus on improving engagement and achievement in the middle grades to increase the numbers of students graduating and enrolling in postsecondary education. The timeline and parties responsible for ongoing gap analyses were not mentioned in this application.

## C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	12

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The grant has the elements of a high-quality plan, but the plan is not credible for meeting the C1 criteria.

The plan details timelines for activities, expected deliverables, and the parties responsible for implementing these activities, as evidenced in the Project Plan table in section A3 of the proposal as well as text found in the narrative of C(1)a-c:

- Middle School Career Advocates help students understand how their learning helps them accomplish their goals
- The district's award-winning Career and Technical Education program, Common Core Standards, 9<sup>th</sup>-grade students' monitored career and academic plans, and integrated curriculum help students structure their learning toward their goals
- Career Academies provide students with deeper learning experiences in their areas of interest
- Exposure to diversity is achieved through project-based learning, authentic problems, and the use of mobile devices to network and make contact with distant places
- The plan provides students with opportunities to master academic content as well as traits such as teamwork, critical thinking, and communication through its Common Core curriculum, problem- and project-based learning, interdisciplinary coursework, Career Academies, and contact with business and higher education partners.

Training for teachers in implementing project-based learning in math, science, English/Language Arts and Social Studies will support these powerful strategies for deep learning and pursuing areas of interest. Interdisciplinary units built on Common Core Standards will increase the likelihood that these plans will prepare students for college and careers.

Accommodations and strategies specific to high-needs students were not evident in the narrative, other than plans to design and implement an early warning alert report to supply interventions for students who are falling behind.

Students have equitable access to technology through district-purchased mobile devices, after school internet access, reduced rates for home equipment and services, and instruction in use of technology through peers and University students. Providing internet-based content offers a variety of content, but it does not assure the quality of content nor its appropriateness for meeting district and student goals.

There are serious weakness of this plan, however. One is its failure to provide intensive staff development and planning time for teachers to prepare personalized instruction that provides a personalized sequence of content and skill development based on the students' gaps between their current achievement and their learning goals and timeline. Another weakness is the district's response to personalized instruction, which will consist of: Meeting with the middle school Career Advocate to plan courses, emphasis on and availability of STEM courses, curriculum based on the Common Core Standards, and student and parent access to the student's academic and learning progress using the VIMS tools. These efforts are insufficient to providing truly personalized learning environments. Accommodations and support for high-needs students are inadequately addressed in this plan, and there was nothing in the narrative to ensure that digital learning content and resources were high-quality.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)

20

15

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district has a moderately high quality, extensive plan, with minor exceptions, for teaching and leading that provides the necessary evaluation, professional development, and team training needed to carry out the plan's goals.

The district presents a strong plan to increasing teachers' individual and collective capacity, because it proposes to form teacher/leader teams, which will pool areas of expertise and spread institutional knowledge to the whole team. Teams will be composed of teachers in instructional technology, career and technical education, special education, and core content teachers who will design and implement a personalized learning environment for students, including interdisciplinary studies and partnerships with higher education institutions. Collaborating with higher education institutions to provide teacher development through adjunct classrooms, visiting experts, internships, leadership institutes, lesson study, and school-based training will also help teachers adapt content for individual student needs.

Frequent measurement of student progress on standards, facilitated through an electronic grade book and standards-based grading, will enable multiple student attempts to demonstrate mastery as well as opportunities for acceleration. The plan does not make it clear, however, how the effectiveness of the resources for improving student mastery will be evaluated or how they will be improved or replaced if they are ineffective.

The web-based MyPGS system manages teacher and leader evaluations and professional development through a collaborative process emphasizing growth. A new multiple-measures system, called Volusia System for Empowering Teachers, provides data to be used for school improvement plans, identifies professional development programs, provides performance data from multiple sources, including parents, and ensures that the process meets state statutes. This system provides

excellent information educators need for their own professional growth. Missing from this system is an approach for targeting interventions to improve teacher practice in identified areas.

The plan includes training and use of a data system designed to enable teachers to improve student progress on standards by responding to individual student needs, access digital and other learning resources, and query individual student data. The district's instructional Services division will design a Multi-Tiered System of Supports for aligning services to individual student needs. The grant funding will also support technical development to permit linking student profiles with appropriate services. The activities and systems of this plan are necessary but not sufficient to ensure that resources are provided to meet student needs. Not mentioned was a means for determining if this plan is effective, which means human resources may be wasted by being mired in a complex system of ineffective supports.

There is evidence in the application grant plan that school leaders and teams will have the training, policies, tools, data, and resources to enable them to create effective learning environments to meet individual student needs. This training is prioritized according to the strategic plan to make the best use of available resources. Training includes:

- Administrator and teacher training in evaluation systems, standards-referenced grading, online grade book and lesson planning, online professional development, and Common Core Standards.
- District-provided professional development that includes train-the-trainer models, webinars, and online courses
- Using teacher evaluation information to improve individual and collective teacher effectiveness for continuous school improvement
- The leader's self-reflection
- Feedback from evaluators
- A state-required annual summative evaluation, including student growth measures, results from the Florida School Leader Assessment which is based on observational data, and a Deliberate Practice metric.

Strengths of this plan include leader self-reflection and state-required annual summative evaluations of leaders. Consistently evaluating the capabilities of leaders to ensure that high quality programs have the resources to be effectively carried out and that teachers have the individual and collective capacity to execute these programs.

The Human Resources Department in the district is charged with recruiting, hiring, and retaining qualified educators, however the grant narrative did not provide a high-quality plan nor specify how the department's procedures and policies ensured that the most effective teachers and principals were hired. According to the narrative, a collaborative process involving Human Resources and the Superintendent's Cabinet determines the most effective placement of principals and teachers based on individual schools' needs. Not mentioned was how ineffective educators are improved or removed from classrooms and schools. This is essential to increasing the numbers of students who have access to highly-effective educators.

## D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	12

### (D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district has a high-quality plan to support implementation through policies and infrastructure:

- a. The central office supplies services through its Instructional Services Division, which created a Targeted Instruction Leadership Team of six subcommittees to organize training, data analysis, instructional coordination, resources, and communication. Instructional coaches, technology instructors, and college and career-readiness advocates will prepare schools to continue programs beyond the grant period.
- b. Schools, individually, have been given the flexibility to adjust schedules, staffing models, and instructional practices to meet the needs of their students.
- c. State law permits students to earn credit based on end-of course exams rather than seat time, graduate early, advance to the next grade mid-year, and earn credit through online-learning.
- d. The district plans to use standards-referenced grading and their instructional management system to enable students to demonstrate mastery at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways, including performance assessments.
- e. The state provides resources and training to teachers to adapt instruction for students with disabilities, and the district uses digital content to serve ELL students.

It is not clear in the application how providing digital content will assist ELL students in meeting standards. If digital

content is not specifically designed for the various levels of need among ELL, particularly for acquiring academic language, it may consume instructional time without improving achievement.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)

10

10

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The narrative supplies very strong evidence that the plan has the infrastructure to support personalized learning. All students and families will have free and low-cost options to have access to the necessary tools and resources both, in and out of school, and technical support for personalized learning. Stakeholders will also have access to relevant student progress reports, course websites with content, and district information.

- a. The district will provide mobile devices to students for in-school use and will allow students to bring their own devices to school. Schools will be open after hours for students and families to use their technology resources. Lower-priced Internet service and computers will be available to qualifying families through a local vendor, and the grant will cover the cost for some families. The district also hopes to use grant funds to pay for internet service at homeless shelters.
- b. Technical support for students, parents and stakeholders will be provided through teachers on assignment, webinars, and a helpdesk.
- c. Parent and student portals are currently available to access student progress information, and as the grant progresses, course websites with instructional content will be completed. The grant plan will also link student data to provide access to recommended learning supports.
- d. The district's LIIS system includes some, but not all, district data systems. Included are databases for grading, curriculum, assessment, employee evaluations and professional development, student information, budget, and instructional improvement.

District-supplied personal notebooks for each student and free access to learning tools and resources assures that all students have equal access to what they need for learning. It does not, however, ensure that these resources will be used for effective learning. Support at home and close communication with teachers is also necessary to successful implementation.

## E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	4

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district has a limited plan for improvement, however no timelines for gathering evaluative data, parties responsible for each activity, or specific deliverables were provided in the application. The district's strategy for continuous improvement provides for a mid-point and late-grant review. In addition the plan includes hiring an internal evaluator to prepare an annual review for the superintendent and school board. This review will be shared with district assistant superintendents and directors, who will pass it on to school staff and administrators. Business and post-secondary partners will be updated on the success of grant activities.

The Project Manager and department heads will use the data to plan improvement. At the school level, teacher/leader teams will review their Scope of Work Plan to determine if changes are needed based on progress data. Progress in grant activities as well as expenditure reports will be available to the public on the district website.

The state will conduct an audit of the district's professional development system at the teacher, school, and district levels. The audit will also assess district initiatives to implement content standards as well as the student outcomes identified. At the end of the grant period, the district's Coordinator for Professional Development will conduct a study to assess progress on recommendations of the prior state audit. Evaluation of grant progress will also review project-based learning evaluations, instructional plans, and student work as indicators of the effectiveness of staff development in this area.

Although elements of plans for evaluation of progress on the grant are present, the lack of specific timelines and responsible parties makes it unlikely there will be high-quality or effective improvement efforts. The results of this could be that resources will be wasted by not replacing ineffective resources with effective ones.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)

5

3

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district will enable ongoing communication with stakeholders, however the grant application does not give goals or

structure for this. Student products may be evaluated by business and postsecondary partners, and may be displayed on the district website for public viewing. Parents, students, staff, and the community have portals for accessing information on curriculum and coursework as well as web-based resources. Schools will post their Scope of Work Plan and their deliverables and progress. What is missing is a clear vehicle for stakeholder engagement and feedback. For example, schools need to seek out parents' opinions, concerns and suggestions on curriculum and instructional methods. Educators need a non-threatening means for letting the district know how the programs work "on the ground." Community members need a vehicle for asking questions and presenting ideas. The risk in not structuring a feedback loop is that the providers' perceptions of progress may not match the recipients' perceptions or needs, resulting in wasted time and resources and possibly a failed effort.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)

5

3

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The district has an adequate number of performance measures, designed to measure academic progress, college and career readiness, and school engagement. The evidence for how it will review and improve the measures over time is not clear, nor is there a rationale for the various measures. Performance measures to be used by the district are listed as:

FCAT in grades 4-8 plus 9<sup>th</sup> grade reading, Annual Measurable Outcomes transitioning to PARCC assessment of the Common Core Standards, PERT for postsecondary readiness, Advanced Placement results, dual enrollment registrations, Florida's career and college readiness indicators, the number of students completing the FAFSA application, SAT-I, Algebra I end-of-course assessment, graduation rates, social-emotional indicators such as the Early Warning-Watch List Report, attendance, and discipline. Performance measures for students with effective or highly effective teachers and principals were not reportable at the time of the grant submission due to delays at the state.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)

5

2

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The application has tabled a list of categories and methods for calculating the effectiveness of investments. Some of these calculations use "effectiveness ratings" from VAM data, but how the effectiveness ratings are created is not described. Some analysis is based on savings as a result of grant activities, such as travel expenses saved by virtual meetings and reductions in staff hours to access data. Others are participation rates. This methodology for evaluating effectiveness is incomplete and is unlikely to accurately identify needed improvements.

## F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	6
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district's grant budget of over \$31,000,000 with over \$1 billion in additional funding is ample for the activities planned. Expenditures for technology hardware and software are very high and rival the amount spent on human resources. Additional project funding comes from the district general fund, Federal entitlement programs, the state of Florida, STEM grants, collaborative grants with postsecondary institutions, Perkins grants, and a Ford Foundation partnership. In-kind support also comes from postsecondary and business partners. The funds from other sources totals \$1,195,290,368.</p> <p>Sustainability of the grant projects is supported by teacher and student created projects, such as digital content. and problem-based learning units. Ongoing evaluation of project outcomes, if it is high-quality, will cull ineffective programs and make the project more efficient for sustainability.</p> <p>A listing of one-time investments versus ongoing costs was not included in the narrative, although the temporary positions and contracted support will end with the grant period, and professional development expenses will be picked up by Title II. It is not clear how notebook computers will be replaced over time following the grant.</p> <p>The lack of specificity on how ongoing expenses will be covered is a threat to the sustainability of this project.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	3
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:		

There were no specifics on financial support following the end of the grant, but the district's plan for sustainability after the grant includes:

- A culture of professional learning; The teacher and leader evaluation system and professional growth system
- A technology infrastructure with interoperable data systems
- An instructional management system with links to other educational resources
- STEM course offerings and career and technical academies
- Web portals for the community with help desk features
- Data analysis capabilities
- Collaborations with postsecondary institutions and the business community
- Common Core standards and standards-referenced grading
- Teachers trained as trainers
- Web-based instructional content and networking
- Middle school to high school and elementary school articulation
- Efficient programs to support students
- Program evaluation for improvement

Many of the plans for sustainability depend on trained staff continuing to provide training and support for other staff and new staff. There are two drawbacks to this plan; trained staff may leave the district, and new staff to the district may not get training unless this is a specified job component of the trained teachers. The narrative states that the district will continue to seek grant funding from government agencies, private foundations, and postsecondary partners. This plan for sustainability is not a secure plan, and the progress made by the grant is likely to be lost.

## Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	6

### Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The Competitive Preference Priority for this application involves the Bucs for Life Program, which serves a diverse population of students living in poverty who are low-performing, lack credits, have failed mandated exams, and have a history of discipline and attendance issues. The program hopes to expand beyond the 100 students it currently has, however there is no high-quality plan apparent in the narrative for doing this. Partnerships have been formed with postsecondary education, private business and industry (through its 6 Career and Technical Academies), and social services organizations.

The narrative for the Competitive Preference Priority is not clear in defining its goals for the Bucs for Life program at Mainland High School, unless the goal is, "the ultimate goal of making every student in the program a college and career ready graduate who is self-sufficient and responsible and who is able and willing to contribute to the community." The grant narrative lists nine population-level desired results for the program. Some of the desired results listed are actually processes, such as "provide interventions..." and "provide opportunities." The proposal includes a "validated" instrument for identifying students who need extra support and describes using it to "determine the individual path of each student," but the 9-item instrument presented would do neither.

Student progress will be monitored at least three times per quarter, and this will be used in evaluating the program and making improvements. The Multi-tiered System of Supports included in the grant application lists 60 interventions along two axes - academic and behavioral supports. This decision-making system is not specific to any particular academic or behavioral needs, and does not appear to be useful for customizing supports. It is not clear how the data from monitoring will link to the interventions that are needed and available.

The Bucs for Life program will partner with career academies to address individual student interests and enable students to earn industry certification. One university partner will provide tutoring services. Unspecified human service organizations may partner with the school to serve students' and families' needs for support.

The grant plan is to scale up the Bucs for Life program by asking middle school and high school staff to identify candidates for the program. The plan for improving results over time uses data results and program surveys to identify program deficiencies.

Education services will be integrated with career preparation services through Career Academies, dual enrollment, and tutoring services. Program counselors, social workers, resources on the MTSS, and community partnerships would supply social-emotional resources.

The plan for assessing needs and assets of students could improve by using high quality (unlike the Attitude and Learning



Survey) tools. A process for evaluating community assets and services to students' needs is described in the plan.

A decision-making process for selecting, implementing, and evaluating supports for individual students' needs will be created to include gathering information from the student, guardian, and others. Options will be presented to families and a plan of action developed for the student. Frequent regular meetings between program staff, individual students, and parents will be held to monitor and modify the plan. Students and parents will have community supports available, such as the Program Advisory Board and Professional Learning Communities.

The Bucs for Life program could be very successful if it were well-planned and managed data and decision-making in an effective way. The program would benefit from assistance in setting goals, procedures, and evaluation techniques to inform decision-making and planning.

## Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

### Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The district application meets Absolute Priority 1. The district adopted Common Core and State Standards and assessments to prepare students for college and career. The district has built an interoperable data system to measure student growth and provide educational resources. It also has data systems to track teacher evaluation and professional development. These two systems work together to provide teachers with real-time data on student performance and resources for individualizing instruction. The evaluation and professional development system enables the district to use an effective teacher evaluation system while providing a variety of professional development resources to teachers and leaders. Although turning around the lowest performing schools was not described in the narrative, the application provides evidence of plans and efforts to raise and accelerate the achievement of low-performing sub-groups.

Total	210	128
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# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0393FL-3 for School Board of Volusia County

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	6

### (A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Applicant articulated a clear vision towards accelerated student achievement, which emphasized the development of critical thinking and promoted college and career readiness through standards-based, personalized, project-based learning. The Applicant explained that interdisciplinary project-based instructional approaches that have been successful at the high schools' Career Academies would be extended to the middle school level and eventually to fourth and fifth grade. The vision is grounded in tasks that are based on student interests. However, while this vision is ambitious, there is little evidence to show that the results of improved student learning are achievable. No student trend data was presented that documented the

success of the Career Academies in terms of advancing student achievement. In addition, no contemporary research or other evidence was presented that supported the expansion of project-based learning to the middle grades, and eventually the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade, as a means of improving student learning. Therefore, this vision is strong in theory, but lacks the data or research-based credibility to make it high-quality. I have scored it in the medium range.

The Applicant does builds on the four core assurances:

- 1) Florida adopted the common core standards in English/Language Arts and Math in 2010 and developed a long-term implementation schedule. The LEA has appropriately accelerated the implementation schedule for English/LA for K-12 to this school year (2012-2013), including implementation of Anchor Literacy Standards in 100% of classrooms.
- 2) The core assurance area of building data systems was well documented through the LEA's explanation of how personalized learning will be supported through the use of the newly implemented LIIS VIMS system.
- 3) The Applicant described that the LIIS also has a tool called My Professional Growth System (PGS), which manages components such as teacher evaluation data, individual growth plans, and professional development. Eventually, this system will assist with management of teacher recruitment, retention, and placement.
- 4) The vision proposes that the LIIS system will increase educators' ability to turn around student performance through standards-referenced grading and personalized learning measures.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The Applicant's approach to implementation supports an appropriate and feasible scaffold design for learning that initially targets all of the LEA's middle-school students and then spreads to fourth and fifth grade students at the elementary level. This is a high-quality implementation plan that is ambitious and achievable and will allow the district to reach its vision.

- A description of the selection process was included and the schools collectively met the competition's eligibility requirements.
- A list of the participating schools was provided
- The total number of participating educators and the total number of participating students, broken down by categories of high-need and low income, was provided.

The Applicant scores strongly for this criterion.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The Applicant proposed a high-quality plan that supported the vision of meaningful district-wide change, first at the middle school level and later at the elementary level. The goals support the plan through collaboration with community partners to implement a project-based learning model that allows students to experience and work on solving authentic problems and projects from the community or workplace. A strong logic model also supports the plan by detailing inputs and output, creating awareness, building capacity, and providing ongoing profession learning that translates teaching practices and models. All of the aforementioned components justify the plan by leading to the overall goal of personalized learning environments for students.

Additional strengths include an implementation timeline with broad coverage of tasks. The intent is that these be broken down specifically in "Scope of Work" plans at the school-level if the grant is received.

I have scored this criterion in the high range.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Ambitious yet achievable annual goals have been determined based on the Florida guidelines for calculating Annual Measurable Outcomes. However, the subgroup comparisons for FCAT and Algebra 1 were not appropriate (see second bullet point). The Applicant did present a strong argument regarding how the proposal was likely to result in improved student achievement overall, and for specific subgroups.

- Performance on summative assessments - the FCAT reading and math scores, grades 4-8, and Algebra 1 End of Course Assessments, grades 7-9, were provided.
- Achievement score for subgroups were provided for the FCAT and Algebra 1 ECAs. However, these are compared to the State's averages, instead of being compared to the LEA's or the State's highest achieving subgroup, as defined in "Race to the Top – District Guidance and FAQ," E-3a, pages 20 – 21.
- Graduation baseline rates and goals were provided for each subgroup and for the overall LEA.
- College enrollment rates were provided

I have scored the application in the bottom of the high range for this criterion.

## B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	3
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Applicant did not provide a clear track record of success in advancing student learning in the past four years. Although the FCAT scores were provided as goal areas in the previous section, the Applicant did not provide FCAT reading and math trend data for the last four years. The Applicant also did not provide Algebra 1 End of Course Assessment trend data. No evidence of the LEA's ability to close achievement gaps was presented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The assessments that were presented as evidence for a record of success were FCAT scores in science at grades 5 and 8. Positive trends were also noted in the numbers of dual enrollment courses successfully completed for credit and in increased course passing rates for AP classes. Although the number of students taking and passing AP classes has risen in the last four years, the percent of students taking the AP exams and receiving a three or higher on the exam has not increased from 2011 to 2012, and is actually slightly less than in 2008.</li> <li>• No trend data was presented showing increased high school graduation rates or college enrollment rates. However, the successes of the current Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs at the Career Academies, which are located at the high schools, were discussed. This interdisciplinary project-based model is the one that the LEA wishes to extend to other schools and courses through the grant. It was stated that several longitudinal studies have shown increased student academic outcomes in CTE courses using the model, but no longitudinal data was provided to document this.</li> <li>• No evidence of the LEA's ability to achieve ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving schools or in its low-performing schools was presented.</li> <li>• The Applicant did provide evidence that student performance data is being made available through the VIMS to students, educators, and parents in ways that inform participation, instruction, and services.</li> </ul> <p>I have scored this criterion in the low range.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	2

### (B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The Applicant did not demonstrate a high level of transparency of processes, practices, and investments by making school-level expenditures public and accessible at the school level. The district does post the district's budget and the salary schedule of instructional staff on the district's website; however, these are not posted or accessible at the school level. The Applicant explained that the district does intend to increase transparency over time, which brought the score from the low

range into the medium range.

I have scored this criterion at the low end of the medium range.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)

10

10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The LEA demonstrated evidence that successful conditions and sufficient autonomy exists under the State context. Grant activities promote meeting State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements for increasing college/career readiness, increasing student participation and success in STEM, developing high-quality educator evaluation systems, and implementing the Common Core Standards.

I have scored this criterion in the high range.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)

10

6

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The Applicant demonstrated evidence that some stakeholder groups were engaged in the proposal development process. Parental participation was inadequate.

- Stakeholder meetings and focus groups were held to gather input. However, there is no mention of parental involvement in the early stages of the proposal development.
- The LEA does have collective bargaining. Teachers were involved in the focus groups in the early development of the proposal. A video presentation was developed about the proposal and sent to middle school principals to show their staff members. An electronic survey about technology use and professional development needs followed the video presentation.
- Representatives of the Teacher Association reviewed the document and the President of the Association signed off on the document
- Community members were able to provide feedback after the grant proposal draft(s) had been developed and posted on the website.
- There is no discussion regarding how the proposal was revised based on feedback received from groups or individuals.
- Letters of support are included from four business and higher education groups.
- There are no letters of support from any parents or parent groups.

This criterion is scored in the medium range.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)

5

3

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

A logical argument was presented that explained why middle school students were at highest need for the personalizing learning environments called for in this grant. The analysis of needs and gaps was thoughtful, but was limited because the Applicant did not provide supporting data for the following points:

- The Applicant discussed that an analysis showed that middle school student achievement had declined over time, but the actual data documenting this achievement decline was not provided.
- Other concerns that were presented regarding the middle schools included students and teachers not meeting expectations in the value-added model, a drop in student cohort group performance between the intermediate and middle grades, and low 9<sup>th</sup> grade Algebra 1 ECA results (indicating a lack of middle school preparation). Again, the trend data documenting these concerns was not provided.
- In addition, it was discussed that students entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade and short on credits, with a history of attendance or discipline issues, are often minority males. It was explained that these students are at-risk of not graduating on time and need to be re-engaged in school with supportive structures. While this is a very important point, no evidence was presented to document these claims.

However, data was presented regarding the numbers of students who had 21 or more absences at the middle schools (although this was not broken down by subgroups). Data was also provided showing the graduation rates at the high schools, broken down by White, Black, Hispanic, and Multiracial student subgroups.

Overall, I felt the discussion was meaningful, but lacked supporting evidence. I scored this criterion in the medium range.

## C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	15

### (C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal outlined a somewhat high-quality plan that enables participating students to pursue a rigorous course of study aligned to high school graduation and college/career readiness standards and accelerates learning through support of individual needs, especially for those students who exhibit early warning signs of not graduating.

#### Strengths include:

- All middle school students will complete a career plan outlining their goals.
- A Career Advocate, hired at each school through the grant, will ensure completion of the plans and will work with the guidance team to serve as a liaison between students, parents and teachers to help students accomplish their goals.
- The grant activities also provide support for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders in connecting what they are learning to their long-term academic and career success.
- Goals will be developed and monitored through the VIMS tools.
- Funding for substitutes is requested through the grant in order that teachers have opportunities to conduct data analysis to measure student progress and use this analysis to inform instruction.
- Through project-based learning, students will have access to and exposure to diverse cultures, context and perspectives, as they would be participating in solving real-world problems. The project-based learning model facilitates increased student motivation as it promotes active engagement of students in their learning.
- Important skills are promoted through effective project-based learning, including teamwork, critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving.
- Through the career and education-planning course, each student will develop a Personalized Academic and Career Plan with their parents, which will outline their sequence of courses.
- Scope of Work plans outlining instructional needs will be developed for each school based on the student population. The school staff will collaboratively design standards-based interdisciplinary units allowing for innovative approaches such as flexible grouping or looping of students.
- Content will be available to all students, including digital learning content, through mobile devices and other systems funded through the grant.
- The VIMS system will provide an integrated platform for students, parents, and educators to access data to inform instruction and individualized planning.
- Data profiling of students will allow for personalized recommendations regarding interventions to help teachers and parents ensure that students stay on-track.

#### Weaknesses include:

- It is not clearly explained how the Career Advocates, which are to be hired at each school through the grant, will ensure completion of the students' career plans or exactly what their role will be in working with teachers, parents, and students.
- In terms of students' mastery of critical academic content, there is little focus on English/language arts, even through assessment results indicate this is an area for growth.
- There was no discussion of the mechanisms in place to provide training for students to ensure that they understand how

to use the tools and resources provided to them.

I have scored this criterion at the low end of the high range.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)

20

15

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The Applicant presents a somewhat high-quality plan that includes an approach to implementation of personalized learning strategies for all participating students that enable them to pursue a rigorous course of study towards college and career readiness and graduation requirements.

Strengths include:

- Teacher teams will be created at each school to share in the responsibility of grant/project implementation.
- The interdisciplinary project-based learning units developed will be aligned with the common core standards and emphasize college and career readiness.
- Electronic tools for managing and analyzing student data have been implemented and will be expanded to include more resources for teachers, students, and parents. These tools provide actionable information that helps educators adapt instruction and provide individualized resources to meet students' needs.
- Professional development has been recognized as an area of strength for this LEA over the last two years under the original Race to the Top Grant. The LEA intends to build on these successes with ongoing professional development opportunities for all staff members related to this proposal through the My Professional Growth System and with additional opportunities. For example, funds for substitute teachers have been requested under RTT-D in order that teachers are released from classroom duties and receive ongoing professional development throughout the school year. This training will support educators' ability to effectively differentiate instruction, measure student progress, and improve practice based on results.
- A new research-based system of performance evaluations for teachers, Volusia system for Empowering Teachers (VSET) has been implemented this school year. Additionally, a new evaluation system for administrators, the Volusia System for Empowering Leaders System/Florida School Leaders Assessment (VSEL/FSLA) has been adopted. These systems incorporate student growth measures and provide frequent feedback on effectiveness including recommendations, supports and interventions as needed. However, these systems are new and will need to be carefully monitored.
- The VIMS system includes a tool designed to help educators analyze individual student and/or group data to inform and plan instruction.
- The LIIS system provides learning resources including curriculum maps aligned to standards.
- The Instructional Services Division's goal is to design and implement a system where specific student services and resources can be identified based on student's academic and behavioral needs. The Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a three-tiered model designed for schools to be able to use their resources in ways that enable all children to be successful.
- The newly implemented teacher and administrator evaluation system should be able to provide information leading towards improvements in educator effectiveness and school culture.
- Ongoing training, systems, and practices to continuously move the LEA towards its goals are included in the plan. Targeted individual professional development is also a component of the new teacher evaluation system.
- Using data from the new teacher evaluation system, there is a plan for increasing the number of students receiving instruction from effective and highly effective educators, including hard-to-staff areas.
- The human resources department works with the administrative teams to appropriately place principals and teachers based on individual school needs.

Weaknesses include:

- It was not clear how all the new tools and resources that have been implemented will be monitored, evaluated, and continually improved.
- This plan is based on the assumption that project-based learning will broadly improve student achievement, but no evidence has been provided in the application to document this.

- Although many community partners were mentioned in the application, only four submitted letters of support.

I have scored this criterion at the low end of the high range.

## D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	12
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The LEA has clear and effective policies, rules, and practices that facilitate personalized learning and promote the vision, although more specificity was needed in certain areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The central office reorganized its teams to facilitate collaboration and communication. A Targeted Instructional Leadership Team (TILT), comprised of six subcommittees, leads implementation at the district level, while instructional coaches and other key personnel provide support at the individual school level.</li> <li>Individual school leadership teams will be provided with the flexibility they need to design learning environment based on their students' needs, for example, extended learning hours or creative scheduling.</li> <li>Students who demonstrate mastery will have the opportunity for mid-year promotion and to finish high school early. Students will also be able to participate in courses through online or blended education. Funding is being requested through this grant in order to contract out for a Learning Management System to implement an online/blended learning program.</li> <li>Standard-referenced grading practices and the VIMS online grade book are designed to give students multiple opportunities and ways to demonstrate mastery of standards. However, more specificity was needed regarding the practicality of allowing students multiple opportunities and methods of demonstrating mastery. It is unclear how this will be accomplished.</li> <li>More detail was needed regarding how learning resources are made fully accessible to all students, including those with disabilities or English learners. For example, it was unclear how services for English language learners are being provided through digital content and whether or not this program is showing success with this population.</li> </ul> <p>I have scored this criterion in the low end of high range.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	10
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Applicant has a high quality plan for project implementation through the development of infrastructure that supports personalized learning. This plan also demonstrates a strong commitment to providing equitable leaning opportunities to all students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The LEA has a plan to support equitable use of learning resources, regardless of income, both in and out of school. This includes the purchase of mobile devices that can be checked out, opening up the school facility after hours for students who do not have technology or internet at home, providing technology access to local homeless facilities, and a local internet provider offering reduced prices for low-income families.</li> <li>Instructional technology teachers will provide technical support for students, educators, and families.</li> <li>Parents and students will initially have access to information on grades, attendance, assessment results, and progress reports. Over the grant period, the Applicant intends to expand the content available, including a system that will provide recommendations for learning supports.</li> <li>The LEA and schools have an interoperable data system.</li> </ul> <p>I have scored this criterion at the top of the high range.</p>		

## E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	8

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

There is a feasible and clear strategic plan for monitoring progress towards project goals. However, there is inadequate presentation regarding how the results will be used to make adjustments and revisions during implementation. In addition, stakeholders are not engaged in the continuous improvement process.

- The LEA proposes to hire an internal evaluator to collect and monitor data regularly. In addition, the LIIS allows for internal analysis at any point in the year, although it is not specified what this will involve.
- An annual review will be prepared for the district's leadership team and this data will also be disseminated to the participating schools. Although it is said that corrective actions will be discussed, it is unclear how the results will actually be used for improvements or revisions.
- To provide information to external stakeholders, reports will be posted on the district's Race to the Top tab on the district's website. However, there are no opportunities for stakeholders to become engaged and participate in the improvement process.

I have scored this criterion in the medium range.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)

5

3

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Ongoing community involvement with the business and university partners is robust in the plan. However, parental involvement is limited.

- The plan involved some student products being on display and students and teachers possibly producing digital content.
- The plan included parents having access to information about their student's grades, attendance, coursework, etc.
- The plan included Scope of Work plans and other documentation being posted on the web.
- Parents have access to information, but are not truly engaged.

I have scored the application in the medium range for this criterion.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)

5

3

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Performance measures were outlined with annual targets. For the most part, they were ambitious, yet achievable. However:

- The first part of this section (before the Performance Measure tables) is unclear in several areas and some of the requested information was not discussed, for example, "How will the LEA review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress?"
- The use of the science assessment at 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> as the "academic leading indicator of successful implementation" was concerning due to the fact that the FCAT science in 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> is an assessment in which this LEA claimed (per earlier sections of this proposal) to have already shown significant improvements. In English/language arts and math, this LEA has not shown achievement gains. Therefore, English/language arts and math should be the primary focus for future academic improvement in the middle and upper elementary grades.

This criterion was scored in the medium range.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)

5

4

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The plans to evaluate the effectiveness of investments were appropriate and contributed to a high-quality plan.

- Areas of funded activity were listed with specific documentation that would be collected and serve as evaluative evidence provided for each area. These plans were achievable. However, not enough detail was provided in regards to how effectiveness ratings would be obtained from the data collected. In addition, no timelines for evaluation activities



were provided.

This criterion was scored in the low end of the high range.

## F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposed budget identifies supporting funds, provides required cost description and cost assumption information, and is sufficient to support the project. However, rationale and priorities for investments are not clear in some areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The budget fully encompasses the project's main goals, which are to engage students in personalized learning environments through project-based learning and to provide professional development for educators that will increase their effectiveness and build their capacity to integrate technology.</li> <li>Investments for each of the project areas are broken down, explained, and prioritized. In sum, these investments will provide sufficient support to the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal.</li> <li>The supporting budget documentation and tables were provided as required.</li> <li>Resources that will support the project, both one-time and long-term, were described, including RTT-D funds, and internal funds. It was explained that in some cases, external grants, support from community partners, or other external sources of funding would be needed.</li> <li>Investment priorities were not always clear or reasonable. For example, approximately \$2,300,000 is included for district-level positions. This seems top-heavy in terms of personnel who do not have any direct contact with students. Other areas, like travel and equipment, also seemed somewhat excessive in terms of costs.</li> <li>In several cases, rationales for investments contributing to project success were not fully explained.</li> </ul> <p>I have scored the application at the top of the medium range for this criterion.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	4
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Applicant does not have a high-quality plan for long-term sustainability of the project's goals after the grant period.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant grant resources will be directed towards providing professional learning for educators. While it is stated that these costs can be reduced over time, other than the mention of Title II funds, it is not clear how ongoing professional development or professional development for new staff members will be funded. There does not appear to be a long-term plan to provide the same quality or quantity of professional development opportunities to new teachers.</li> <li>It was explained that some personnel positions may not be needed after the grant period and may be phased out, but specifics were not provided, making this ambiguous.</li> <li>The one-time purchase of large amounts of technology will mean that there will be significant long-term costs in terms of replacement and maintenance. How these costs will be handled was unclear.</li> <li>A focus on the effective use of resources and reduced duplication of efforts and programs will increase sustainability, as mentioned, but these efforts should already be in place.</li> </ul> <p>The application scored in the low end of the medium range for this criterion.</p>		

## Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	7

# Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

As presented, the Bucs for Life program is designed to augment the participating High Schools' resources by providing additional student and family support to address social, emotional, and behavioral needs of at-risk students. Several community partnerships have been formed and appropriate population-level desired student results have been identified. However, no hard evidence is provided to document that the current Bucs for Life Program is successful and should be spread. No data was presented showing that the current program has had an impact on graduation rates or college and career readiness for its participants. Although it is clear that there are strong feelings that the current Bucs for Life program is highly successful and should be expanded to involve more students, the Applicant neglected to provide supporting evidence that the current program is making a positive difference for students. In short, the competitive preference priority lacked the foundation necessary to provide sufficient argument for expansion of this program. However, the priority was well-developed in all other areas.

I have scored this criterion in the top of the medium range.

## Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

# Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The Applicant comprehensively builds on the core assurance areas and is focused on creating personalized learning environments for students and educators.

The Applicant has accomplished the following goals through the initial RTT grant:

- 1) Development and implementation of an educator evaluation system including implementation of My Professional Growth System, which manages the information regarding the new evaluation systems and links to professional development offerings and human resources functions.
- 2) Development of technology infrastructure including an interoperable data system.
- 3) Implementation of an electronic management system, which includes an electronic grade book and curricular/instructional resources.
- 4) Web portals for students, staff, parents, and community allowing increased communication, retrieval, and analysis of information.
- 5) Improved technological support.
- 6) Increased emphasis on career/college readiness, including more STEM offerings and Career and Technical Academies.

This proposal builds on these accomplishments by providing additional resources and services, including professional development for educators geared towards increasing their effectiveness and increasing their capacity to integrate technology in order to personalize student learning. This proposal engages students in their learning through interdisciplinary project-based experiences with the goal of improved student outcomes. Although no evidence is provided that a key element of this proposal, expanding project-based learning, is data or research-based, the Applicant has kept a keen focus on creating personalized learning environments as a top priority.

Total	210	146
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